

Statement of Senator Olympia J. Snowe
Hearing to Investigate International Olympic Committee
April 14, 1999

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are here because the Olympic Games are supposed to be the embodiment of integrity, good sportsmanship, and above all else, success based on merit and merit alone. Unfortunately, the facts that have recently come to light regarding the International Olympic Committee's site selection process have been profoundly disturbing, to say the least.

I understand from statements made by my good friend and distinguished former colleague from Maine, Senator Mitchell, who headed the Special Bid Oversight Commission, that Salt Lake City did in fact have a superior presentation when it came to all the bids considered for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Unfortunately, their selection has been tainted by news of inappropriate conduct designed to secure the bid for Salt Lake City, within what appears to be a well-entrenched culture of gift giving inside the IOC.

Not only does this affect the viability of the Games from a monetary standpoint, but even more importantly it casts a pall over the legitimacy of the event that is nothing short of a tragedy for the legions of honest athletes participating in the Games, as well as the millions upon millions of people around the world who tune in to see competition at its best - and its most

fair.

So I want to applaud the Chairman for calling this hearing today. Because as the Senate committee charged with overseeing the United States Olympic Committee, as well as the integrity of the Olympic Movement from the American perspective, we have an obligation to help remove the tarnish that threatens to dull the glory of the Olympic Games. We have the responsibility to do whatever we can to restore the luster of one of the truly great international events the world has ever known.

And there should be no mistake, the United States has a tremendous stake in whatever path to reform the IOC may take, and we are justified in voicing our concerns and considering appropriate action to encourage such reforms.

The fact is, 9 of the 11 top IOC sponsors are U.S. firms, which pay \$10 to \$15 million per year to the IOC. And it's been reported that about 70 percent of the IOC's funding comes from the United States. That's a significant investment, and I believe in return we deserve assurances that the IOC will conduct itself in a manner consistent with the same high ethical standards we would expect of athletes competing in the Games, or judges judging the Games.

In that light, I welcome the selection of Dr. Henry Kissinger and Mr.

Peter Ueberroth to the IOC 2000 reform panel. I think that's a step in the right direction, but it's only a step. Much more clearly needs to be done, and I look forward to hearing the testimony here today so that we might best determine what, if any, course of action may be required by Congress.

So, with that, I just want to again thank our distinguished Chairman for convening this hearing, and I also want to take this opportunity to again express my appreciation to my former colleague, Senator Mitchell, for undertaking this effort and for all his hard work on the investigation.